

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT ATTACHMENT**

can further include adding a new set of tags and repeating the sorting process with the same or a different collection capture agents and thereby identifying a protein or molecule of interest.

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend claims 1, 16, 38, 44, 45, 46, 67, 68, 72, 88, 94, and 98 as follows:

1. (Amended) A combination, comprising:

a plurality of capture agents, wherein each capture agent specifically binds to a polypeptide; and

a plurality of oligonucleotides that each [comprise]comprises a sequence of nucleotides that encodes a preselected polypeptide,

wherein:

the preselected polypeptides encoded by the oligonucleotides comprise the polypeptides to which the capture agents bind; and

the oligonucleotides are single-stranded, double-stranded or partially double-stranded.

16. (Amended) [the]The combination of claim 15, wherein the common region is 3' of the epitope-encoding region and/or of the divider region.

38. (Amended) A set of oligonucleotides comprising formula:

5'-D<sub>n</sub>-E<sub>m</sub>-3'

wherein:

each D is a unique sequence among the set of oligonucleotides and contains at least about 10 nucleotides;

each E encodes [an] a sequence of amino acids that comprises epitope;

each epitope is unique in the set;

each epitope is a sequence to which a capture agent binds;

each of n and m is, independently, an integer of 2 or higher; and

the oligonucleotides are single-stranded, double-stranded, and/or partially double-stranded.

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44. (Amended) A combination of sets of oligonucleotides, comprising the set of oligonucleotide of claim 42 and another set of oligonucleotides of formula:

[5' C-D<sub>n</sub> 3' ,]5' C-D<sub>n</sub> 3', wherein C is a sequence of nucleotides common to all oligonucleotides in the set.

45. (Amended) A combination of sets of oligonucleotides, comprising the sets of oligonucleotides of claim 43 and another set of oligonucleotides of formula:

5' C-E<sub>p</sub>-FA<sub>s</sub> 3', wherein:

E<sub>p</sub> is one of the E<sub>1</sub>-E<sub>m</sub> epitope-encoding oligonucleotides;

[FA]FA<sub>s</sub> comprises a sequence of nucleotides that contains a sufficient portion of E<sub>p</sub> to amplify nucleic acids, if it is used as a primer, that contains E<sub>p</sub>, but insufficient to encode the epitope encoded by E<sub>m</sub>;

each of s and p is an integer of [to] 2 or higher up to m.

46. (Amended) A combination of sets of oligonucleotides, comprising the sets of oligonucleotides of claim 44 and another set of oligonucleotides of formula:

5' C-E<sub>p</sub>-FA<sub>s</sub> 3', wherein:

E<sub>p</sub> is one of the E<sub>1</sub>-E<sub>m</sub> epitope-encoding oligonucleotides;

each FA<sub>s</sub> comprises a sequence of nucleotides that contains a sufficient portion of E<sub>p</sub> to amplify nucleic acids, if it is used as a primer, that contains E<sub>p</sub>, but insufficient to encode the epitope encoded by E<sub>m</sub>;

each of s and p is an integer of [to] 2 or higher up to m.

67. (Amended) A method for screening a nucleic acid library, comprising:

a) creating a tagged library by the method of claim 63;

b) translating the library or a sublibrary thereof;

[b)]c) contacting proteins from the translated library or sublibrary with a collection of capture agents to produce complexes between the tagged proteins and capture agents, wherein:

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each of the capture agents specifically binds to a [polypeptides encoded]polypeptide encoding an E<sub>m</sub>; and

each of the capture agents is identifiable;

[c)]d) screening the complexed capture agents to identify those that have bound to a translated protein of interest, thereby identifying the E<sub>m</sub> that is linked to the protein of interest.

68. (Amended) The method of claim 67, further comprising:

[d)]e) isolating the nucleic acid molecules encoding the E<sub>m</sub> linked to the protein of interest.

72. (Amended) The method of claim [72]71, wherein the particles are optically encoded.

88. (Amended) The method of claim 87, wherein the label is optical, chromogenic, luminescent, chemical, fluorescent or electronic.

94. (Amended) The combination of claim 29, wherein n is from about 2 up to and including 10<sup>5</sup>.

98. (Amended) The method of claim 96, wherein the collection of capture agents [comprise]comprises antibodies.